



## The County Connection

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### **Executive Director Delivers Good Federal News to Head Start Association**

With an enrollment base of more than 104,000 children ages 3 to 5, the California Head Start Association (CHSA) is a key partner to First 5 California in its joint effort to provide early educational opportunities for all children.

First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry delivered an engaging speech January 30 about new Head Start funding and the overall status of early learning programs in California to hundreds of patrons at the Association's annual conference. As a result of Perry's continued correspondence with President Barack Obama's administration and the California Legislature, she delivered an optimistic forecast with measured realism of the present fiscal situation.

"We are pleased to see a \$2 billion investment into the Child Care Development Block Grants and are expecting at least \$2.1 billion from the federal government for Early Head Start and Head Start." Perry told association members, "But here in California, we are still facing an extraordinary deficit that threatens to roll back gains we have made in early childhood development."



*First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry at the California Early Head Start Association*

The passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Perry said, provides California an opportunity to secure significant investment for the state's most vulnerable children. The federal stimulus package promises \$1.1 billion for Early Head Start and \$1 billion for Head Start, thereby providing services for approximately 120,000 additional infants and children over two years. In addition, the package delivers enough funding to support quality child care for an additional 150,000 children and keep 200,000 children from being

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dropped from critical child care services.

Recognizing the urgency of action, Kay Wernert, president of the CHSA Board of Directors and director of Marin Head Start, responded to Perry's speech. "The next few months and even years will bring some unique opportunities for California to substantially strengthen systems and partnerships for effective support for young children and their families in California and California needs to get ready to respond quickly and in an intentional way to maximize the outcomes of the opportunities," she said.

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## **Thanking Members of Congress**

On February 23 and 24, First 5 Executive Director Kris Perry and State Commissioner Molly Munger visited the offices of several members of the California congressional delegation in Washington D.C. to update them on the critical work First 5 is doing in California.

Following the gracious infusion of support from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Perry and Munger also wanted to thank the elected officials for their dedication to California's youngest children.

"We wanted to let them know about our excellent school readiness program, our smoking cessation campaign, our *Kit For New Parents*, and our healthy nutrition program," Perry said, "In addition, we wanted to reinforce our relationship and assure them of our efforts to utilize the federal stimulus dollars to enhance our program support, technical assistance, and additional training for the highest quality of service."

They also discussed the tense state budget negotiations, and highlighted the ongoing advocacy First 5 executive staff provided in support of critical health and early education services during last month's budget impasse.

Munger and Perry also discussed the implementation of SB 1629. The measure, enacted last legislative session, requires the state to create a committee charged with developing a structure for quality early learning processes. The advisory committee will convene its first meeting on March 23. Its charge is to conduct an analysis of teacher qualifications, English learner support and group size ratios.

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## **Budget and Legislative Update**

After months of legislative negotiations, the Governor signed ABX3 17 (Chapter 11, Statutes of 2009) in February. The budget trailer bill proposes to redirect approximately \$1.6 billion in Proposition 10 funds over the next five years to help balance the state budget. The language in ABX3 17 (Evans) cannot be

enacted unless it is approved by the voters in a special election to be held May 19.

SB 1 (Steinberg), a measure to improve children's health coverage, was recently introduced in the State Senate. The bill is expected to be presented and debated in the Senate Health Committee at a later date. First 5 California will provide a support position for the bill as currently drafted.

First 5 California's legislative division is currently reviewing hundreds of bills that were recently introduced to meet the February 27 bill introduction deadline. Many of these bills were introduced as placeholders or "spot bills," which means language will further be amended in the bills prior to the committee hearings.

First 5 California supports measures designed to improve or expand access to early and periodic assessments of children's health and development issues and for programs that provide high-quality early childhood education for children up to age five, among other issues.

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## **First 5 California's *Kit for New Parents* Wins National Award**

On February 24, First 5 California's innovative *Kit for New Parents* was nationally recognized with a Best Practices Award from the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP). First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry accepted the award during the AMCHP's annual conference in Washington, D.C.

As the recession deepens and money to pay for parenting books and classes becomes scarce, it will be even more important to get free educational resources like the *Kit* into the hands of new and expecting parents, Perry said.

The AMCHP's prestigious Best Practices Award recognizes innovative public health services and initiatives that advance the well-being of mothers and children. The *Kit* is now available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

To order a free *Kit*, call (800) KIDS-025 for English assistance, (800) 50-NIÑOS for Spanish assistance, (800) 597-9366 for Mandarin or Cantonese assistance, (800) 597-9511 for Korean assistance, or (800) 597-9855 for Vietnamese assistance.

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## **Special Needs Project Implementing Best Practices**

More than 50 people participated in the First 5 California Special Needs Project Working Session on Effective Practices in Sacramento on February 26. Dr.

Dean Fixsen and Dr. Karen Blase from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitated a rich discussion on current county activities with a primary focus on best practices. County teams participated in open discussion and dialogue on topics including developmental screening, coordination of and access to services, inclusion, and challenges.

In attendance were leadership teams from 13 counties around the state, from Humboldt to San Diego. Riverside, Sonoma, and San Diego counties led discussions that highlighted work completed by Special Needs Project Demonstration Sites.



*(Left to Right) First 5 Program Mgmt. Administrator Mike Fuller, Dr. Dean Fixsen, Dr. Karen Blase and consultant Sheila Wolfe at the SNP symposium.*

Marin County shared positive outcomes and unique experiences from its collaborative screening program with the local First 5 commission and Easter Seals. First 5 San Diego reported on successes in providing inclusion opportunities for children through its Power of Preschool program.

Conversations focused on innovations in the field of early childhood development and education, implementation, sustainability, and scaling up. At the end of the day, small groups worked together to come up with recommendations on funding, data, policy, social marketing, services, capacity building, and coordination.

Dr. Fixsen and Dr. Blase will return to California in spring 2009 to conduct a symposium as a follow-up to February's session.

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## **2009 Water Cooler Conference - Learning Begins at Birth**

First 5 California and its collaborative partners are preparing for the first *Water Cooler Conference*. The two-day event will feature local, national and statewide advocates in early learning development.

The 2009 *Water Cooler* theme is *Learning Begins at Birth: The Larger Education Conversation*. It will take place at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in

Sacramento, March 24 and 25.

Early childhood development experts and advocates will convene to share new and innovative practices on delivering high quality services to families with children ages 0 to 5. Elected officials, including California Assembly Speaker Karen Bass and California Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg will address conference attendees.

In addition, philanthropist Susan A. Buffett and Dr. Ed Zigler, professor emeritus of Yale University, often called the Father of Head Start, are also expected to address conference attendees.

Plenary workshops will provide valuable information and strategies for improving early learning outcomes for all children. Discussions will focus on policy efforts, fiscal leveraging, workforce development and public awareness.

The Water Cooler is a collaborative effort by The Advancement Project, First 5 California, The California Community Foundation, Children Now- Invest in Kids, Preschool California, and many other organizations.

Participants may register online at [www.thewatercoolerconference.eventbrite.com](http://www.thewatercoolerconference.eventbrite.com) or call The Advancement Project at (916) 441-0162.

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## **Statewide Conference Cancellation**

In light of the economic challenges facing California and the nation, First 5 California decided to cancel its statewide professional development conference scheduled for April 14 - 16 at the Hyatt Embarcadero in San Francisco.

First 5 California places great value on professional development and the dissemination of new research and best practices for members of the early learning and health fields.

However, during this time of fiscal uncertainty for our state's children and families, we must maximize our immediate efforts toward meeting urgent needs. In the coming months, we will evaluate the feasibility of holding a condensed training institute at a later date.

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***COUNTY FOCUS (New feature. Each month we will feature a different County Commission program):***

### **First 5 Santa Barbara County Launches *My Healthy Child***

First 5 Santa Barbara County, local pediatricians, and the United Way have partnered to launch *My Healthy Child*, an educational health

campaign to reach low income and hard to reach families.

The program relies on a collaboration of physicians and child advocates giving parents specific resources every child needs for healthy growth during their most critical years of development. The *My Healthy Child* initiative is based on research showing that parents view their child's doctor as their most trusted source of information.

On February 2, the *My Healthy Child* campaign kicked-off at the Eastside Neighborhood Clinic, one of seven participating sites. Partners unveiled materials that physicians will share with an estimated 1,000 parents per month, including an online 0 to 5 Resource Directory, A Wheel that helps parents keep up with their child's developmental milestones, Notes from the Doctor pads with tips on issues important to parents and magnets displaying children's health tips, and the newly launched Web site ([www.myHealthyChildSB.org](http://www.myHealthyChildSB.org)). All of the materials and Web site are offered in English and Spanish.



First 5 Santa Barbara Executive Director Pat Wheatley displays materials to reporters during the "My Healthy Child" program launch.

The campaign materials and Web site were created with input from physicians and child development specialists. First 5 California's *Tips for Parents and Caregivers* was used to help develop the health and learning tips.

First 5 Santa Barbara Executive Director Pat Wheatley encourages a team effort to accomplish *My Healthy Child* goals. "*My Healthy Child* is an outstanding example of organization collaboration to address community needs." Wheatley said, "United Way recruited the volunteers to maintain the supplies at all of the health clinic sites, and will assist in interviews for evaluation. The staffs of the clinics have provided excellent input on important messages communicated to families. First 5 is proud to coordinate this project and assist families to enhance their children's health and development."

*My Healthy Child* is focused on giving children a healthy start, identifying concerns early and getting children the support they need to achieve their full potential. Similarly, First 5 Santa Barbara County and First 5 California continue to provide critical services to all children 0 to 5 in a collaborative effort through the *School Readiness Initiative*.

More information about First 5 Santa Barbara County can be located at [www.first5santabarbaracounty.org](http://www.first5santabarbaracounty.org).



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## **NO-BUTTS About It**

First 5 California's public education and outreach campaign about the dangers of secondhand smoke is well underway. One of the primary focuses of the campaign is the one-year anniversary of SB 7, California's Smoke-Free Cars with Minors law.

American Cancer Society research indicates 21 million children across the United States live in homes where residents or visitors smoke on a regular basis.

This unhealthy habit often transfers from the home to the car.

The public education campaign is a collaborative effort between First 5 California, Farmers Insurance, the California Smokers Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS), Pep Boys, the Black Infant Health Program, and African American churches throughout the state. It will focus on raising awareness statewide, especially among African American, Latino, and Asian communities about the dangers of secondhand smoke on young children and how smokers can get help to quit.

Beginning this month, smoking cessation messages will be prominently displayed and distributed at locations that millions of Californians regularly visit -- insurance offices, auto repair shops, churches and community events.

Highlights of this campaign include:

- Distribution of English-, Spanish- and Asian-language flyers at Farmers Insurance offices across California
- Prominent displays of English- and Spanish-language posters in more than 50 Pep Boys retail outlets across the state
- Distribution of postcard-size quiz cards and bulletin announcements to African American churches
- Message delivery at large community events, including Sacramento's Capital City Black Expo and Los Angeles' KJLH Eggstravaganza

County commissions are encouraged to participate in spreading the word about the dangers of secondhand smoke on young children. Call the First 5 California County TA Team at (310) 552-4101 for more information or to get involved.

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## **Hands-on Health Van a Hit with Tet Festival Attendees!**

First 5 California's Hands-on Health Van made a stop at the 2009 Tet Festival in Orange County on January 30. The event is one of the largest Vietnamese

American Lunar New Year celebrations in the nation, attracting more than 100,000 people over the course of three days.

The van's "edutainers" guided them through fun and entertaining activities that taught the importance of brushing teeth and eating fruits and vegetables. First 5 California paper crowns were among the most popular items at the festival -- both kids and parents could be seen wearing them throughout the day.



*The First 5 California Hands-on Health van helped kick off the Lunar New Year with children at the Tet Festival in Orange County.*

While kids were engaged in interactive learning activities, their parents and family members received materials in Vietnamese about proper nutrition and the importance of an active, healthy lifestyle. More than 2,000 in-language flyers were distributed.

Overall, nearly 6,000 children and parents visited the Hands-on Health exhibit.

Tet is the Vietnamese New Year that begins on the first day of the Lunar New Year. The celebration lasts for seven days.

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